

Modal particles: Problems in defining a category*

Steven Schoonjans

KU Leuven/FWO-Vlaanderen

This contribution addresses the problems of defining and delineating the category of modal particles and determining its relation to other word classes. The paper first presents the most important points of discussion, mainly at the form level, and subsequently attempts to come to grips with this apparently problematic situation by referring to the notions of prototypicality, granularity, and conceptualization. Rather than fully resolving the categorial problem, these notions serve as a tool to better understand discussion and how it should be approached. The argumentation is primarily based on the situation in German, but a brief comparison to French is included.

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1. Introduction

In the last decades, modal particles (MPs) have constituted the topic of a significant body of linguistic studies. Nevertheless, there is no general agreement about the definition of this category:

Die Termini *Partikel* und *Modalpartikel* müssen in jeder linguistischen Arbeit sowie in Nachschlagewerken stets neu definiert werden, da bislang noch keine verbindliche Abgrenzung gegenüber anderen Wortklassen existiert. (Bastert 1985, 31)

('The terms *particle* and *modal particle* have to be defined time and again in every linguistic writing and in reference works, as so far, no stringent delineation against other word classes exists.' – my translation, S.S.)

This quote focuses on the relation with other word classes. The lack of agreement at this level is closely related to the fact that scholars disagree on what counts as a MP. Although Bastert (l.c.) already hinted at this problem nearly 30 years ago, it is still of topical interest today, as Moroni (2010, 3) indicates:

In der Forschung herrscht Uneinigkeit darüber, welche Lexeme zur Gruppe der Modalpartikeln zu zählen sind. Dies liegt daran,

dass je nach Ansatz unterschiedliche Eigenschaften als Kriterien für die Abgrenzung dieser Gruppe festgelegt werden.

('In the research community, there is disagreement about which lexemes are modal particles. This is due to the fact that, depending on the framework, different features have been put forward as criteria to delineate this group.' – my translation, S.S.)

Precisely this problem of defining the category 'modal particle' constitutes the topic of the present contribution. In the next section (§2), an overview of the most important points of discussion will be offered. In a next step (§3), the key notions of prototypicality, granularity, and conceptualization, which will serve as a gateway into the definitional problem, will be introduced. These concepts may not fully resolve the problem, but at least, they allow to come to grips with it better. This theory will then be applied to the central issue of this book, the relationship of MPs and discourse markers, in section 4. Finally, in a brief discussion of French (§5), it will be shown that the situation described in sections 2-4 is not typical of German alone: languages such as French do at least show striking similarities.

2. German modal particles: problems in defining a category

As mentioned in the introductory section, the definition of 'MP' in German is a highly debated topic. In the following, an overview of the most important issues will be offered, taking first (§2.1) an internal perspective (what are MPs?), before turning to the external perspective (how does the category of MPs relate to other categories?) in §2.2.

2.1. Internal definition

The internal definition is a description of a category as such, without referring to other categories. This includes two dimensions: the intension, i.e. the typical features of the category, and the extension, i.e. the category members (cp. Geeraerts 1986, 157). As Moroni's quote above shows, these two dimensions are closely related, and discussions situated at one level (intension or extension) bring about discussions at the other level.

2.1.1. Intensional definition

As a starting point for the discussion of the intensional definition, it may be useful to get an overview of the features typically ascribed to MPs. The following list is based on the overviews in Thurmair (1989), Autenrieth (2002), and Diewald (2007; this volume):

- a. uninflected;
- b. unstressed;
- c. cannot be negated or intensified;

- d. can be combined, but not coordinated;
- e. no constituent or clause value;
- f. syntactically and prosodically/graphically integrated into the clause;¹
- g. in the middle field;
- h. scope over the entire clause;
- i. used especially in colloquial speech;
- j. homophones in other categories.

This list of features strongly resembles a classical definition in terms of necessary and sufficient criteria, as Diewald (this volume, p.19 of manuscript) suggests. It seems legitimate indeed to assume that prototypical

¹ The notion of 'syntactic integration' is somewhat problematic, as it may indicate that an element is part of the syntactic structure in that it forms (part of) a constituent or is syntactically governed by another element. This is not the case for MPs. Therefore, the editors proposed to refer to the topological phrase structure as presented by Gerdes & Kahane (2007), and hence to speak of topological integration and positional constraints. However, MPs are not as constrained topologically as is sometimes claimed (cp. *infra*). Furthermore, this is not actually what is meant here with 'syntactic integration'. The notion is used here solely to refer to the surface level, at which MPs do not stand out from the rest of the clause: they cannot, for instance, be inserted as a parenthesis or made more prominent by means of a cleft structure.

members of the MP category show all these features, and some of these features are really uncontroversial. That MPs do not show inflection, for instance, has not been questioned so far. Quite the contrary: the fact that they are called 'modal *particles*' is an indication of this, as particles are normally uninflected. The same holds for their not having constituent or clause value. However, for most other features, counterexamples can be found. In some cases, these have already been hinted at in the literature, while others have remained largely unnoticed so far.

Unstressedness is an interesting case in point. The traditional claim is that MPs cannot be stressed at all (e.g. Bublitz 1978), but some scholars state that a few particles can be stressed under certain circumstances (e.g. Thurmair 1989), and still others think that it is normal for MPs to have a stressed form (e.g. Ikoma 2007). The most extensively discussed particle in this respect is *ja*. It is generally accepted that this particle normally bears stress when used in orders, as in (1), where it brings about an increase of the illocutionary force.²

- (1) Und lassen Sie sich hier *JA* nicht mehr blicken! (Thurmair 1989, 109)

'And don't you *JA* dare to show up here again!'

² More detailed analyses of stressed *JA* are offered by Thurmair (1989), Meibauer (2003), and Gutzmann (2010), among others.

Similarly, *nur* and *bloß* can be stressed in orders without their MP status being questioned. More disagreement exists about particles like *denn*, *doch*, and *schon*. Several scholars, including Meibauer (1994), Abraham (2000), and Ikoma (2007), claim that they are also MPs if they are stressed, whereas others (e.g. Thurmair 1989) think that the stressed variants are adverbs or focus particles, not MPs.

Another problematic feature is the restriction of MPs to the middle field, i.e. the part of the sentence between the finite verb and any non-finite verb forms or (in subordinate clauses) between the subordinator and the verbal group.³ One may question the appropriateness of field structure theory for the study of spoken language (in which MPs are mostly found), as in spoken language, it does not seem to be uncommon to bend the traditional field distribution rules, but even when a division into fields is possible, it seems that the feature of middle field positioning is at best a strong tendency, not an absolute rule.

This is illustrated by Imo's (2008) analysis of evidence-marking *halt*, a prototypical MP of German according to Thurmair (1989). Of the 296 occurrences Imo analyzes, 14 can be situated in the front field (i.e. before

³ A somewhat more detailed overview of the German sentence structure is offered by Fischer & Alm (this volume).

the finite verb) or in the back field (also sometimes called 'end field', i.e. after the non-finite verb), as in (2):

- (2) - Die Autos müssen andersrum fahren.
 - Ah ja, da hat's gekracht *halt*. Ist einer so gefahren wie du.⁴
 ' - The cars have to drive the other way.
 - Oh yes, there's been a crash *halt*. Someone has been driving like you.'

In this case, one may indeed refer to the fact that in colloquial speech, the field distribution rules are not always followed: as Imo (2011a) shows, it is not abnormal to have certain elements (including MPs) in the back field in spontaneous speech which do not belong there according to traditional grammars. However, there are also cases where the particle occurs in the front field. A typical example, mentioned by e.g. Thurmair (1989), Ormelius-Sandblom (1997), and Abraham (2010), is the use of MPs after a question word, as in (3):

- (3) Warum, warum *nur* ist immer alles so furchtbar für mich?
 (F. Zorn, *Mars*, p.160)

⁴ The example is taken from a transcript in Imo (2008, 143), but has been adapted to more conventional writing for the ease of the reader.

'Why, why *nur* is everything always so terrible for me?'

Admittedly this is not very frequent either: in literary texts reproducing spontaneous speech, only 2,23% of the particles in question word questions actually take this front-field position (Schoonjans submitted-a). It cannot be excluded that the figures are somewhat higher for true spontaneous speech, but whatever the case, it is clear that middle field positioning is not an exceptionless rule.

Thurmair (1989, 27) hints at another exception: MPs within a noun phrase or a prepositional phrase. This is apparently overlooked by many scholars, but it does occur:

- (4) Dieser *ja* leider viel zu früh verstorbene Komponist hat uns eine Reihe von großartigen Werken überlassen. (Thurmair l.c.)

'This composer, who *ja* unfortunately passed away far too early [literally: 'This *ja* unfortunately far too early died composer'], has left a series of magnificent works.'

- (5) Ich meine "echte" Valuetitel, sowas wie coca-cola, altria, ihr wisst schon... nur mit *halt* recht hoher Divrendite etc.⁵

'I mean "real" value titles, something like Coca Cola, Altria, you know... just with *halt* quite elevated dividend proceeds etc.'

In these cases, the field the particle figures in depends on where the constituent containing it is placed. In (4), for instance, this is the front field, simply because the noun phrase containing *ja* is in the front field. It thus seems that these examples are not real exceptions to the middle field tendency, but should be analyzed separately. They do, however, show that another typical feature of MPs may be questioned as well: the clause scope (feature *h* in the list above). In these cases, it seems that the particles have scope just over the constituent they occur in, not over the entire sentence. In (4), for instance, *ja* marks that the hearer will agree that the composer passed away too early, but not necessarily that s/he agrees on his having created a series of magnificent works. Hence, this feature turns out not to apply to all particle attestations either (see also Hentschel 1983, 50).

The discussion of the syntactic position does not end here, however. It is clear that MPs can occur outside of the middle field, yet none of the

⁵ <<http://www.wallstreet-online.de/diskussion/1119309-201-210/dividenden-riesen>> (20-10-2011).

previously mentioned particles can occur sentence-initially. There are, however, scholars (e.g. Helbig 1988) who assume that certain elements which can occur sentence-initially count as MPs as well, whereas others classify them as 'situative particles' (e.g. Hentschel & Weydt 2002) or as adverbs (e.g. Thurmair 1989, Meibauer 1994). A typical example is *schließlich* (6), which is similar to English *after all*; others include *allerdings*, *immerhin*, *jedenfalls*, and the like.

(6) Im Grunde ist es nur eine verkappte Entschuldigung.

Schließlich habe ich sie lebend nicht mehr gesehen.

(H.G.F. Schneeweiß, *Was nun, Prometheus?*, p.68)

'It actually is just an excuse in disguise. *Schließlich* I haven't seen here alive anymore.'

For most other features, potential counterexamples seem to have passed largely unnoticed so far. One example is the claim that MPs cannot be intensified. As shown by Schoonjans (submitted-c), obviousness-marking *einfach* does have an intensified variant, *ganz einfach*:

(7) Er spielt die Rolle eines Mannes *ganz einfach* besser als ein wirklicher Mann.

(R.F. Schütt, *Auch der Eskimo klebt an seiner Eisscholle*, p.25)

'He plays the male role *ganz einfach* better than a real man.'

A similar remark can be made for the non-coordinatability of MPs. Again, *einfach* is a case in point, as this particle is regularly combined with *schlicht* by means of *und* ('and'). *Schlicht* is admittedly not a typical element on MP lists, but Autenrieth (2002, 64-88) shows that it at least strongly resembles typical MPs.

- (8) Die Faktoren, die bei einer solchen Schätzung berücksichtigt werden müssen, sind *schlicht und einfach* nicht objektivierbar.⁶

'The factors to take into account for such an estimate can *schlicht und einfach* not be objectified.'

One could object that this is not actually a coordination of MPs, but a coordination of adverbs which as a whole has acquired MP(-like) status, next to the simple form *einfach*. The same holds for *ganz einfach*. In that case, the question arises whether these complex units can be considered as MPs. This issue cannot be resolved within the scope of the present paper, but it should be clear that there is room for additional discussion.

⁶ Source: COSMAS II (database from the Institut für Deutsche Sprache in Mannheim), corpus *rei*.

There are, however, other cases of coordinated MPs which cannot be fully explained by referring to their diachrony. An example is the coordination of the near-synonymous particles *halt* and *eben*, as in (9). Such occurrences are rare, and several natives of German indicate that they sound odd to them, but they do occur.

- (9) Ja, es ist *halt und eben* schon so, dass die Society krank ist, nicht?⁷

'Yes, it is *halt und eben* the case that the society is ill, isn't it?'

Finally, although it is generally assumed that MPs cannot be negated, they do sometimes fall under the scope of negation:

- (10) Das ändert sich *doch nicht einfach* über Nacht?⁸

'That does *doch nicht einfach* change over night?'

⁷ <<http://derstandard.at/3367476/Halbleere-Events-halbvolle-Glaeser>> (01-12-2011).

⁸ <<http://www.netmoms.de/fragen/detail/das-aendert-sich-doch-nicht-einfach-ueber-nacht-15571266>> (01-12-2011).

- (11) Aber wenn hier bereits ein Kind vorhanden ist, muss der Ehegatte (vorausgesetzt, es ist sein Kind) *doch nicht sowieso* für das Kind sorgen?⁹
- 'But if there is already a child, the husband (supposing, it is his child) does *doch nicht sowieso* have to take care of the child?'

Strikingly, the particle is in both cases preceded by *doch nicht*, which seems to act as a negative counterpart of the simple particle *doch* (the function of which is to indicate that an affirmative answer is expected), rather than as a simple succession of *doch* and a negation. Precisely this seems to explain why it is possible to have another particle under the scope of the negation. Again, my goal is not to resolve the problem, but to show that there is room for discussion.

Summing up, most of the features which are typically ascribed to MPs can to some extent be subject to discussion. This does not make these features useless, however, as they are still required for the definition of the prototype of a MP (cp. §3.1), but it should be clear that there is more to it.

2.1.2. Extensional definition

⁹ <<http://www.austrianlaw.at/forum/viewtopic.php?f=16&t=2188>> (01-12-2012).

The discussions at the intensional level have repercussions for the extensional definition as well. Some examples have been mentioned already: can the stressed forms of *denn*, *doch*, and *schon*, larger units like *ganz einfach* and *schlicht und einfach*, or forms like *immerhin* be categorized as MPs? But even disregarding these dubious cases, scholars do not agree on which elements count as MPs. A comparison of how many MPs are distinguished makes this clear. Franck (1980), for instance, lists 14 MPs, whereas Krivonosov (1977) thinks there are no less than 24 MPs in German. This debate is illustrated in Table 1, which gives an overview of 21 lexemes that are regularly listed as MPs, and indicates whether they are mentioned by ten scholars who offer a 'closed' enumeration of MPs. Strikingly, only eight forms (*bloß*, *denn*, *doch*, *eben*, *ja*, *mal*, *nur*, *schon*) are mentioned in all publications referred to in the table. The discussion of which forms count as MPs is thus not restricted to typical borderline cases like the ones mentioned above, but also affects more traditional elements such as *etwa*, which is not included by e.g. Moroni (2005; 2010), although it cannot be related directly to a defining feature which is itself subject to discussion.

Table 1. The modal particles listed by different scholars

	Hartmann (1975)	Krivosov (1977)	Bublitz (1978)	Franck (1980)	Hentschel (1986)	Thurmair (1989)	Szulc-Brzozowska (2002)	Kürschner (⁴ 2003)	Engel (2004)	Moroni (2005)	Moroni (2010)
<i>aber</i>	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>auch</i>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>bloß</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>denn</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>doch</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>eben</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>eh</i>						+				+	
<i>eigentlich</i>			+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>einfach</i>	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>etwa</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		
<i>erst</i>		+			+		+	+			
<i>halt</i>	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>ja</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>mal</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>nicht</i>		+				+			+	+	
<i>nur</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>ruhig</i>	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>schon</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>sowieso</i>						+				+	
<i>vielleicht</i>	+		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>wohl</i>	+		+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+

2.2. *External definition*

Given the disagreement on the internal definition of 'MP', it is not surprising that there is discussion at the external level as well, as it is precisely a category's intensional definition that differentiates it from other categories and determines its position in the linguistic system. A few issues of this kind have been hinted at above, e.g. the distinction between MPs on the one hand and adverbs and situative particles on the other.

However, the discussion stretches even further. There is, for instance, no general agreement on how many different kinds of 'particles in the strict sense' (i.e. uninflected forms which are not prepositions, conjunctions, or adverbs, cp. e.g. Möllering 2001) there are in German: Möllering (2001) distinguishes six different particle types, whereas Kürschner (⁴2003) proposes seven types, and Hentschel & Weydt (1990) list eight kinds of particles. On the other hand, not all scholars consider MPs to be 'particles in the strict sense' as defined above: a frequent alternative view is that MPs are actually a particular kind of adverb (e.g. Cardinaletti 2007; 2011).

The discussion even raises a more fundamental question: is there a word class 'modal particle' at all? Most of the above-mentioned scholars do think there is, but Thurmair (1989) considers 'MP' as a potential function of words belonging to a general class of particles. In the same vein, Rüttenauer (1983) claims that MPs are simply a loose group of forms which also fulfill

other functions. It thus turns out that there is no full agreement (yet) regarding the position MPs take in the linguistic system.

3. Coming to grips with the issues

So far, I have mainly given an overview of issues in delimiting the category of MPs. These issues are not unimportant for the study of MPs, as the position taken can have major repercussions for the analysis. The central theme of this volume, the relationship between MPs and discourse markers, is one such issue which is closely related to matters of definition: the way this relationship is conceived influences the conceptualization of the individual categories, and vice-versa. Therefore, in order to determine the nature of this relationship, it is important to tackle the definition issues.

Precisely this is the goal of the present section. Referring to the cognitive-linguistic notions of prototypicality (§3.1), granularity (§3.2), and conceptualization (§3.3), it will be shown how the definition issues can be handled. This is not to say that all discussions will receive a final answer. Quite the contrary: the goal is to come to a better view of MPs and how they relate to discourse markers despite the disagreements. The discussion will be illustrated with relevant examples, but as it is situated primarily at a meta-level (in that it talks about analyses and discussions), it will mainly exhibit a theoretical slant.

3.1. Prototypicality¹⁰

The idea that linguistic categories are prototypically structured is not new as such (e.g. Company Company 2002, Taylor ²1995, and Weber 2010), and the claim that the MP category is in that position has already been made by Thurmaier (1989), albeit not in these terms. Indeed, as the definitory issues described in section 2 have shown, it is hard to offer an Aristotelian definition of the notion 'MP' in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Being confronted with such problems, scholars in different domains have recurred to prototype theory, and as will be shown in the following, this is an interesting starting point for coming to grips with the definitory issues in the case of MPs as well.

Prototypicality plays at both type and token level. The two are partly linked, as type prototypicality typically follows from token prototypicality. Tokens showing all typical features of MPs are more prototypical instantiations of the MP category than those which do not. Compare, for instance, (12a), which is a slightly modified version of example (2), with the construed variant (12b), which contains a more prototypical (middle field) use of *halt*:

¹⁰ For a more elaborate introduction to prototypicality in linguistics: see e.g. Geeraerts et al. (1994), Geeraerts (1997), and Taylor (²1995).

- (12) a. Ah ja, da hat's gekracht *halt*.
 b. Ah ja, da hat's *halt* gekracht.

As these examples show, not all instantiations (tokens) of the same particle (type) need to be equally prototypical MPs. This distribution of tokens is also what determines to what extent a type is a prototypical category member: the more tokens of a type are prototypical instantiations of a category, the more prototypical a member of that category the type is.

As a second example, take the case of *glaub(e)*, a particle which has originated from the CTMP form *glaube ich* 'I believe' and is used mainly in the South-West of the German-speaking area.¹¹ Imo (2006) states that *glaub(e)* is situated "between" three categories (MP, modal adverb, and matrix clause): it shows clear similarities with typical members of each of these categories, but differs from them in important respects as well (e.g.: more variation at scope level than MPs, cannot answer a question on its own unlike modal adverbs, cannot be negated unlike a matrix clause – see Schoonjans 2012b for a more elaborate discussion). In other words, the type *glaub(e)* is not a prototypical member of any of the three categories.

¹¹ The meaning nuances *glaub(e)* can convey are rather diverse, but a basic meaning aspect seems to be the expression of uncertainty about or reduced commitment to the content of the utterance (cp. Schoonjans 2012a).

(13) Da hab ich *glaub* sogar bedient. (Imo 2006, 270)

'I *glaub* even served there.'

As I have shown elsewhere (Schoonjans 2012b), however, *glaub(e)* seems to be closer to the prototype of a MP than to the prototypes of the other two categories. This is because the majority of the instantiations of *glaub(e)* resemble a MP more than a modal adverb or a matrix clause. There admittedly are attestations of *glaub(e)* which do not show all features of MPs and hence are not prototypical MP attestations themselves. Therefore, the type *glaub(e)* is not a prototypical MP either. However, the tokens which can be analyzed as prototypical instantiations of the category of MPs (i.e. which show all features of prototypical MPs) are more numerous than those which cannot. Therefore, *glaub(e)* as a type is still closer to the prototype of the MP category than to the prototype of the other categories.

The role of prototypicality for the present discussion is somewhat more complex, however. The reason is that MPs have developed through processes of grammaticalization.¹² Precisely this is one of the reasons for

¹² Some scholars (e.g. Molnár 2008) disagree, but for the present argumentation, it is assumed (following e.g. Abraham 2000, Autenrieth 2002, as well as Diewald 2007 and in this volume) that the development of MPs is a case of grammaticalization, although possibly not a prototypical

the difficulty of delineating the category of MPs, as it is hard to determine at which point a form is sufficiently grammaticalized to be said to have developed a prototypical MP use (cp. Diewald this volume, p.13 of manuscript).

Eigentlich is an interesting example in this respect. In recent literature, it is generally accepted that *eigentlich* is a MP, but some thirty years ago, this was still subject to discussion. Kohrt (1988), for instance, claimed that *eigentlich* is not a MP, but just has adverb status, whereas Oppenrieder & Thurmair (1989), in a reaction to Kohrt's paper, argued that two uses of *eigentlich* (adverb and MP) have to be distinguished.¹³ Looking at the arguments put forward by both parties, it seems that they were just arguing whether *eigentlich* was sufficiently grammaticalized to call it a MP, as they mainly refer to the dialectics of desemanticization and retention, and of decategorialization and structural persistence (Breban 2009), hence to typical features of grammaticalization, albeit not in these terms.

A complicating factor is the fact that in processes of grammaticalization, the source form often pursues its life next to the new uses developing from it. This is the case with most MPs, including *eigentlich*, which has

one. However, perceiving the process differently does not undermine the reasoning, as long as it is seen as a gradual development.

¹³ None of the authors mentions the adjectival use of *eigentlich*.

developed precisely from the adverbial use of this form. The fact that for Kohrt, *eigentlich* is not a MP, may well be due to its already being a prototypical adverb: he seems to judge the existing prototype sufficiently strong not to assume a new one, unlike Oppenrieder & Thurmair. The fact that *eigentlich* already was an established member of another category thus seems to influence the positions in the debate.

It should be clear that a particular linguistic element can be a member of different categories at the same time. Consider the (construed) dialogue in (14):

- (14) - Sag mal, wie heißt dein Bruder *eigentlich*?
- *Eigentlich* heißt er Johann, aber ich nenne ihn meist Hansi.
- Und glaubst du, dass ich ihn auch Hansi nennen darf, oder soll ich seinen *eigentlichen* Namen verwenden?
- '- Hey, what's your brother's name *eigentlich*?
- *Eigentlich*, he's called Johann, but I usually call him Hansi.
- And do you think I can call him Hansi as well, or should I use his *eigentlich-ACC* name?'

This dialogue contains three uses of *eigentlich*: first as a MP (marking that the speaker passes on to a new theme, cp. Thurmair 1989, 176-177), second as an adverb ('actually, in reality'), and third as an adjective ('actual, real'). It may not be the most central member of the adjective and adverb categories,

as it cannot be intensified (**sehr eigentlich*) and lacks a comparative and superlative form (**sein eigentlicherer/eigentlichster Name*), but still it is at least a rather prototypical member of each of the three categories.

This need not be a problem in itself: as Geeraerts et al. (1994, 57-58) indicate, a prototype can be undecided at a certain point. This may hold for the 'category' feature of *eigentlich*, prototypical *eigentlich* being either an adjective, an adverb, or a MP. Thus, if the tokens of a type are prototypical instantiations of different categories, then the type itself can also be a prototypical member of different categories (and, as a consequence, different categories can share prototypical members).¹⁴ Similarly, the 'category' feature of *glaub(e)* is undecided, as this form falls between three categories (with 'MP' however being the stronger candidate), and prototypical *glaub(e)* itself is not a prototypical member of any category (although some of its tokens are prototypical instantiations of the category of MPs).

¹⁴ This implies that the relation between the different uses is seen as a case of either heterosemy or polysemy, not of homonymy, as some scholars (e.g. Hentschel & Weydt 2002) claim. Given the diachronic relationship between the uses, and given the existence of ambiguous cases precisely because one use has developed from the other (without context, the first *eigentlich* in (14) could also be interpreted as an adverb), the homonymy analysis is not followed here (cp. Diewald 2007, 125).

Summing up, it has been argued that the MP category has a prototypical structure with fuzzy boundaries towards other categories. Each particular type is to a higher or lower degree a prototypical member of this category, and can at the same time be a prototypical member of different categories. Furthermore, each type itself has more and less prototypical instantiations (e.g. postponed *halt*, as in (12a), is not just a non-prototypical instantiation of the MP category, but also of the type *halt*, which is prototypically used in the typical MP position, i.e. the middle field).

That a category is prototypically structured is not astonishing as such, but it should be clear that this is an important factor in understanding some of the discussions about the definition of 'MP'. Considering this category as prototypical is a plausible analysis, yet only few scholars (apart from Thurmair 1989) have made reference to such an analysis, although some of the questions as to whether a particular linguistic element is a MP or not actually come down to the question to what extent it is a (more or less prototypical) MP.

As a final remark, note that this analysis in terms of prototypicality fits in with the distinction Diwald (2007; this volume) makes between a core group and a peripheral group of MPs, just that the prototypicality analysis does not draw such a strict borderline between core and periphery.¹⁵ The

¹⁵ In fact, an analysis in terms of prototypicality continua may be preferable to a neat distinction for two reasons: on the one hand, it has been shown that

particles Dieward (this volume, p.12 of manuscript) lists as core group members are indeed all closer to the prototype, and note that in the more recent works mentioned in Table 1 above, all core particles except for *etwa* are accepted as MPs. In other words, their classification as a MP is less subject to discussion than is the case for more peripheral elements such as *erst*. Dieward herself (this volume, p.19 of manuscript) indicates that the list of features she offers, and which closely resembles the list given in §2.1.1 above, "is generally acknowledged (with some discussion about single notoriously problematic points) as relevant and sufficient criteria for classifying MPs." This is true for what she calls the core group. Indeed, except for the case of unstressedness, the discussion is not so much about whether prototypical instantiations of MPs show these features, but rather about the status of the cases which deviate from this pattern: can we consider them as MPs, and if so, to what extent does it make the violated features problematic? In other words, Dieward's main goal is to define the prototype (which is the aim of traditional definitions), while admitting that there are less prototypical cases, whereas my goal is to hint precisely at the points at which non-prototypical cases may deviate from the prototype, and to frame the discussion by referring to notions such as prototypicality.

typical core members such as *halt* can deviate from the prototype as well, and on the other hand, some peripheral elements may be closer to the prototype than others.

3.2. *Granularity*

Prototypicality is not the entire story, however. Imo (2011b) introduces another notion which is, in my view, of major importance for the discussion of the relation between the categories of MPs and discourse markers: granularity. Strictly speaking, granularity has two dimensions, which I call vertical and horizontal.¹⁶ Vertical granularity is related to the generality or specificity of the categories, whereas horizontal granularity relates to the preciseness of the category demarcation. For the discussion of the relation between MPs and discourse markers, mainly vertical granularity is at stake. Therefore, and because most issues of horizontal granularity are closely related to issues of prototypicality dealt with above, the discussion of the latter will be rather brief.

The notion of prototypicality implies that categories have fuzzy boundaries and show overlap, hence that there are transition zones between categories. This is illustrated in Figure 1: the category of MPs shares some features with other categories, including modal adverbs, situative particles, and discourse particles, for instance the fact of being uninflected, and hence overlaps with them.

¹⁶ Imo (2011b) does not make this distinction explicitly and mainly focuses on horizontal granularity.

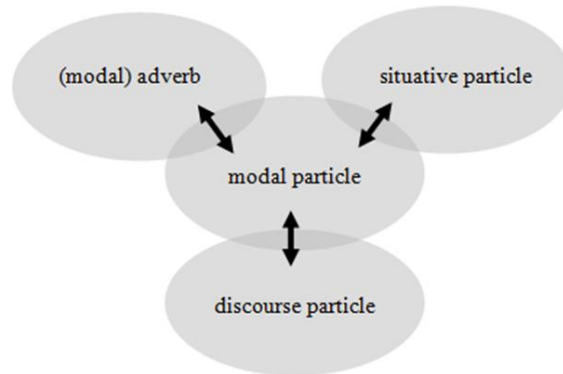


Figure 1. MPs overlapping with other categories.¹⁷

At this level, (horizontal) granularity affects the question of where a category ends. How much variation does the prototype allow? How many features of the prototype must a form show to be a (proto)typical instantiation of a category? In other words: where is the borderline between prototypical and less prototypical instantiations, or between non-prototypical instantiations and forms which are not (i.e. not even non-prototypical) instantiations of a category? How broad is the transition zone

¹⁷ This drawing is somewhat simplified: the MP category may overlap with even more categories, some categories may show more overlap than others, the other categories are likely to show some overlap as well, and the ellipses are clearly delineated although they represent categories with fuzzy boundaries.

or the overlap zone? These are all issues regarding the edges of the prototypes and the question of how fuzzy these edges are.

Vertical granularity, on the other hand, pertains to the number of categories that are distinguished, and thus to their generality or specificity. As an example, note that in the top-left ellipse in Figure 1, the qualification *modal* is bracketed, a sign of its somehow being optional. This is related to the question whether different types of adverbs (modal, temporal, local...) have to be distinguished. For some analyses, it may be useful to make the difference, whereas in other studies, the difference may be of lesser importance. It thus mainly depends on the goals and the level of detail of the analysis whether the distinction between modal and e.g. temporal or local adverbs is relevant, and hence whether it should be made or not.

For the external definition of MPs, vertical granularity seems to be an important factor in understanding the different views. The main principle of vertical granularity is that the number of categories to be distinguished (and hence their degree of specificity or generality) depends on the goals of the study. If the differences between categories (say, between the different kinds of adverbs) are of lesser importance for the analysis, it may be justified to start off from one more general adverb category, whereas if the differences do matter, referring to the subcategories may be a more suited approach.

The case of the different types of adverbs is a traditional one: the different adverb types are subclasses of the adverb category. A similar point

can be made for the different kinds of particles as subclasses of the more general category of 'particles in the strict sense' (cp. §2.2). However, depending on which similarities and differences are at stake, or are considered more important or more salient, different groupings of more specific categories under one more general heading may be possible. This seems to explain the different positions MPs have received in the linguistic system: it is possible to depart from traditional taxonomies and put together, for instance, MPs and modal adverbs under the heading of uninflected modalizing elements.

Recall in this respect that some scholars, including Cardinaletti (2007), consider MPs as a particular subclass of adverbs. This is not too strange a claim as such, given that both categories consist of uninflected elements only, for instance, and the function of MPs is at least highly similar to that of modal adverbs. The fact that Cardinaletti considers MPs to be a particular subclass implies that she is aware of the fact that they are to some extent different from what she calls 'strong adverbs', but she still thinks the similarities are significant enough to add MPs to the class of adverbs.¹⁸ This is represented in Figure 2: MPs are grouped together with modal adverbs

¹⁸ In a later paper (Cardinaletti 2011), she nuances the need of seeing MPs as a particular subclass and simply classifies them as weak adverbs. However, the fact that these can be opposed to so-called strong adverbs implies that there is some distinction.

(and other kinds of adverbs, which are not shown in the drawing) to constitute together the group of adverbs.

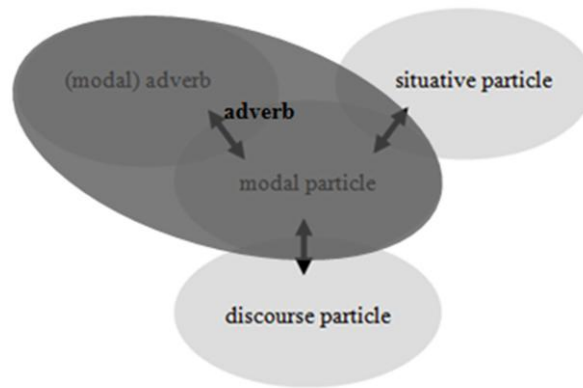


Figure 2. MPs as a subclass of adverbs.

The discussion whether so-called situative particles like *allerdings* and *immerhin* are MPs (see §2.1.2) is similar. Situative particles and traditional MPs share an important range of features, the most notable exception being that situative particles can be used in clause-initial position, unlike MPs. As counterexamples can be found to most other features of MPs, one may question the use of creating a separate category for situative particles. Especially if the distinction between situative particles and traditional MPs is not too important for the analysis, it may be justified to group them together in one category, as in Figure 3.

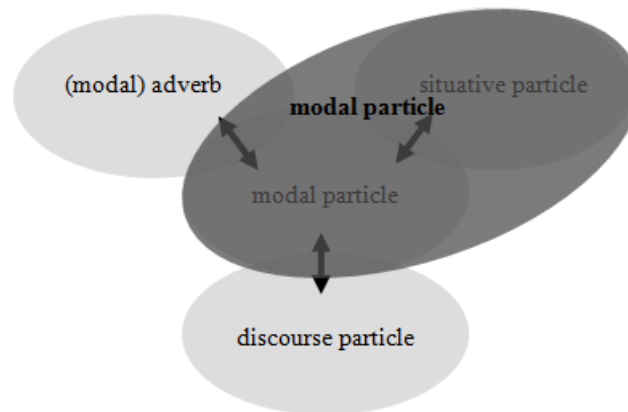


Figure 3. Situative particles as a subclass of MPs.

It thus turns out that prototypicality is not the entire explanation of the debate on the definition of the notion of 'modal particle': the level of granularity plays an important role as well, in that depending on the perspective taken and on the relative importance or salience of the defining features, different higher-level groupings can be envisaged.

3.3. Conceptualization

Next to prototypicality and granularity, a third notion comes into play: conceptualization. Just as people have concepts such as DOG, CHAIR, or YELLOW, so too do linguists have a concept MODAL PARTICLE, i.e. the concept which is at the basis of the category of MPs. Describing the category of MPs actually comes down to defining the concept MODAL PARTICLE. An important aspect of the notion of 'concept(ualization)' is that it

is a "dynamic activity of embodied minds interacting with their environment" (Langacker 2010, 33): our concepts are shaped (in part) by our personal experiences with and observations of instantiations of the concept at stake.

Conceptualization, as understood in this paper, is precisely the process of shaping the concepts and relating the observed phenomena to them. Although categories may to some extent be pre-established (there have been attempts to define the notion of 'MP' before), actual experience still plays a role (cp. Langacker's quote). It is through this experience that we (partly unconsciously) get a feeling of which defining features may be more important or more salient than others, and what the extension of a category is. Finding out what is a salient defining feature or a prominent category member comes down to determining what is considered as such.

An important word here is 'considered': this comes down to subjective interpretation. Since personal experience is an important shaping factor for concepts, these concepts may differ across humans, i.e. the intension and extension of a concept need not be identical to all people (Portner 2005, 8-9). This makes conceptualization an individual process: people may conceptualize phenomena differently because they are working with non-identical concepts, or because they conceive of the relations of the phenomena to the concepts differently. Hence, what drives

conceptualization is to a considerable extent personal experience and personal interpretation.¹⁹

Differences in conceptualization of linguistic phenomena are not exceptional, as Weber (2010) indicates. Such differences in conceptualization may lead to different classification proposals. Therefore, no way of categorizing the phenomena is by definition better or more correct than the other (although they may not appear to be equally suited for a particular analysis²⁰), as no conceptualization is better or worse *per se*: it is just a different way of seeing things.

The conceptualization issue plays a role in the case of MPs. It should be clear from the discussion in §2 that there are indeed different views on the concept MODAL PARTICLE. These differences are found at each of the three levels of definition distinguished above, and each time, conceptualization may play a role. At the intensional level, it is one of the factors determining

¹⁹ That people do share concepts (albeit non-identical ones) is a result of social convergence. Here lies an interesting parallel to the dialectics of the individual and the social in the functioning of language (Weber 2010): each individual has its own language system with its own categories, shaped to a major extent by personal experience with language, but still communication is possible because of social convergence.

²⁰ Cp. Jacobs's (2011, 346) claim that the viability of a classification depends on what one wants to do with it; see also Diewald (this volume).

which features are considered salient enough to be included in the definition, and to what extent they have to be absolute (i.e. exceptionless) (cp. Schoonjans 2011, 157). As an illustration, recall that for some scholars, MPs cannot be stressed, whereas others think that some or even all MPs do have a stressed variant. At the external level, determining which categories can be united in one superordinate category is a matter of conceptualization as well, as this also depends on which features are considered more salient than others and on how the relation between the concepts is conceived. Take for instance the classification of MPs as adverbs. Cardinaletti (2007) ranges the MPs among the adverbs because she conceptualizes MPs as adverbs, i.e. she considers the features that unite MPs with adverbs (uninflected, modal meaning...) to be more salient than those which differentiate them (unlike MPs, most adverbs can occur sentence-initially, for instance).

Finally, at the extensional level, conceptualization comes into play when determining the classification of less prototypical tokens (and thus also of less prototypical types). In this case, the amount of defining criteria met normally steers the classification. In the case of postponed *halt* (example (12a)), for instance, it is clear that we are dealing with a (non-prototypical) MP instantiation. A MP does not normally occur in the back field, but since the topological tendencies seem to show exceptions and since this is the only deviation from the MP prototype, it seems legitimate to argue that *halt* is a MP even in (12a).

In other cases, however, the deviation from the basic pattern is bigger, and the amount of criteria met may not be decisive. In those cases, the salience of the features comes into play. Consider, for instance, the following example of *glaub(e)*:

- (16) Aber auch hier gibt's Hürden. Zum Beispiel musst du die Bude schon (*glaube*) 1 Jahr haben, um Anspruch zu haben usw.²¹

'But there are hurdles here as well. For instance, you need to have the booth for (*glaube*) one year already to have a claim and so on.'

In this example, it is harder to classify *glaub(e)* as a MP than in more common cases like (13), taken up again as (17) below:

- (17) Da hab ich *glaub* sogar bedient.

First of all, unlike typical MPs, *glaube* is not integrated in (16), as it is bracketed. Furthermore, although it is used in the middle field, it does not take a usual MP position, which is related to the fact that it only scopes over

²¹ <<http://www.mediengestalter.info/forum/45/bab-beantragung-41072-1.htm>> (18-02-2010).

the following adverbial ('one year'), not over the entire clause. Whether such attestations can be considered as (non-prototypical) MPs is a matter of horizontal granularity, but it also depends on how salient the MP features met are thought to be when compared to the features which are not met. In case one considers the scope relations and the degree of integration as more salient, one may be less inclined to think of *glaube* in this case as a MP but rather as an adverb, because in these respects, it is more like other, typical adverbs such as *ungefähr* ('approximately').

That some features are more salient than others is generally agreed upon in prototypicality theory (Geeraerts et al. 1994, 89), but which features are the more salient ones is a matter of conceptualization.²² Thus, depending on how a phenomenon is conceptualized, different features may be more or less salient, and this may lead to different classifications. Hence, it is not just the aims of the study that determine which features are most relevant, but also the way the analyst handles and interprets the data.

As a final example, consider the aforementioned case of *eigentlich*. To Kohrt (1988), *eigentlich* is an adverb, not a MP, whereas Oppenrieder & Thurmair (1989) think it can be used both as an adverb and as a MP. This is because they conceive of the phenomena in different ways: in Kohrt's view, the 'MP-like' attestations of *eigentlich* are still so similar to the adverbial

²² Although other factors such as frequency and markedness play a role as well.

attestations that there is no need to distinguish them (and thus, he only considers *eigentlich* to be a prototypical adverb, adverb being the 'older' category), whereas according to Oppenrieder & Thurmair, the differences between both uses are striking enough to distinguish two category uses. Hence, Kohrt and Oppenrieder & Thurmair propose different analyses, just because they conceptualize the phenomena differently.²³

4. Discourse markers and modal particles: two sides of the same coin?

So far, it has been shown that the definition of 'MP' is subject to discussion, and that this discussion can be related to notions like prototypicality, granularity, and conceptualization. These notions do not resolve the problem, but at least they allow us to handle it, and to deal with issues like the relationship between MPs and discourse markers (DMs) despite the lack of definition. It is important to note, in this respect, that the situation is not

²³ Note that Diewald (this volume, p.13 of manuscript) also hints at conceptualization in this respect, albeit without using this term, when she writes: "With view to peripheral members, it is clear that their status as grammaticalizing elements [...] makes it self-evident that there must be different judgements on the degree of development of single items by different researchers."

very different in the case of DMs, for which there is no unanimity either at either one of the three levels of definition. However, in the case of DMs, several scholars (Fischer 2006, Fraser 1999, Imo 2012, and Schourup 1999, among others) have already commented upon the issue. Therefore, and since the focus is mainly on MPs in the present paper, the definition of DMs will not be discussed in detail here.

The debate is not just restricted to the definitory level, however: like with MPs, several terms have been used to refer to this category, sometimes interchangeably, sometimes implying (subtle or less subtle) differences. Examples include 'discourse markers', 'discourse particles', 'pragmatic markers', 'discourse operators', and so forth. Still, no matter which term is used or how the category is defined, it is clear that it encompasses a rather heterogeneous group of elements fulfilling equally heterogeneous functions (Fischer 2006, 5).

Given this heterogeneity, the question whether MPs are a subclass of DMs seems justified. Several features that are recurrently mentioned in DM descriptions do indeed apply to MPs as well: connectivity (cp. the <KONNEX> function Thurmair 1989 ascribes to some MPs, i.e. the ability of relating a turn to a preceding one), optionality, non-propositional meaning, and so on. Still, a considerable number of scholars do not seem to take this position. A simple look at the different contributions to this volume reveals that there is huge variation in how the MP-DM relation is conceived. Two

important explaining factors seem to be differences in the level of vertical granularity and the terminological chaos.

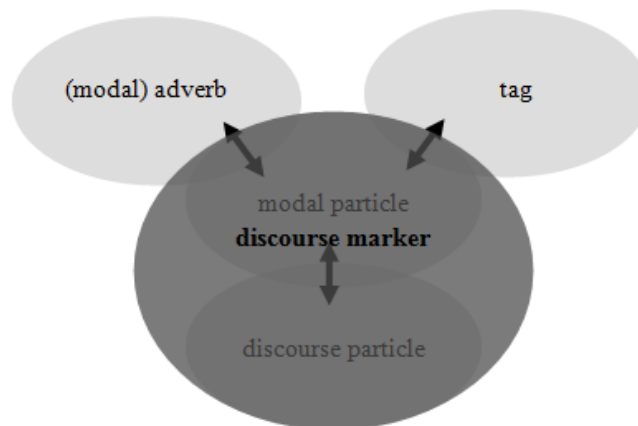
A case in point is the term 'discourse particle' (DP). Several scholars use this term as a (near-)synonym of 'DM' (e.g. Mosegaard Hansen 1998). However, as Schourup (1999, 229) notes, a difficulty with 'DP' is "the competing use of this term in recent years to refer specifically to scalar and modal particles as a group." There are indeed scholars who use the term 'DP' to refer just to MPs, e.g. Bayer & Obenauer (2011). However, as Schourup (l.c.) indicates, none of these smaller groups (MPs, scalar particles, DPs in this restricted sense) "is coextensive (or perhaps even overlapping) with the DM category as typically described."

But even if this particular use of 'DP' as a synonym of 'MP' is not taken into account, the discussion remains: how do MPs relate to DMs? It seems that the notion of vertical granularity can be helpful in tackling the problem, and in coping with the different views. All figures in the present paper contained an ellipse for DPs, but with no indication of how it is conceived. In the drawings, it refers to anything which may be considered as a DM and which does not fall under any other of the categories discussed above (MPs, situative particles, conjunctions...).²⁴ There is some overlap with the MP

²⁴ Note that 'DP' may perhaps not be the most appropriate term, as not all DMs are necessarily particles, i.e. uninflected words (cp. Schourup 1999, 229).

ellipse, in that MPs and DPs (can) share some features and members²⁵, but neither one is thought to encompass the other category.

The core idea of vertical granularity was that, if the similarities are more important than the differences, it may be justified to put together several categories in one superordinate category. It seems that this is what several scholars who consider MPs as a subtype of DMs do (e.g. Stede & Schmitz 2000): on the basis of the similarities with DPs, they group MPs and DPs in one category. This is illustrated in Figure 4: the category of DMs consists of the categories MP and DP. (Note that this distinction between DPs and DMs, one being a subtype of the other, is made here just for convenience, to be able to refer to both groupings by means of different terms; this is not a generalized way of seeing the relation between those terms.)



²⁵ An example is *ja*, which can function as a hesitation marker and which in this use is a DP for several scholars.

Figure 4. MPs as a subclass of DMs.

The main point in the issue of grasping the notion of 'DM' and determining its relationship with MPs thus seems to be terminological: about a dozen terms have been created to refer to these kinds of linguistic elements, but they are often used in non-corresponding ways and at different levels of granularity. In this respect, the issue of whether MPs are DMs is highly similar to the issue of whether situative particles are MPs (see §3.2): the same term is used at two levels of granularity, i.e. in a more general or a more specific way, either including or excluding the other category, but the level of granularity is neither specified nor justified most of the time. As a consequence, the same terms are used for partly different concepts, and precisely this seems to be an important factor in explaining the discussions at the external level: the terminological identity hides conceptual differences which have repercussions on the relation to other categories.

5. Comparison with French

So far, the discussion was mainly based on the situation in German. A logical next step is to ask to what extent the situation in other languages is similar, or whether categories such as DM and MP are necessarily language-bound. This is an important question if one wants to study the relationship

between MPs and DMs, which is the central goal of this volume: if the categories themselves are language-specific, then so is their mutual relationship. Hence, for the relationship between MPs and DMs to be cross-linguistically valid, one first has to make sure that the categories to be related are also found cross-linguistically; otherwise the relationship between the categories will differ across languages and can at most be compared, not generalized.

The goal of the present section is precisely to address this issue of cross-linguistic validity of the category descriptions. Two questions are at order here. First, one has to ask whether other languages have a category of MPs similar to the German one. If this is the case, we need to address how it relates to other categories (adverbs, DPs...), and to what extent this corresponds to the situation in German. Since MPs are often thought to be a typically German(ic) phenomenon, this discussion will be illustrated by referring to a non-Germanic language: French.

5.1. Modal particles in other languages

The question whether the category description of MPs given for German can simply be extended to other languages has to receive a negative answer, for the simple reason that all word classes are language-specific (Haspelmath 2010, 345). However, this does not mean that cross-linguistic comparison (and potentially generalization) is excluded as such; it only implies that

category descriptions which hold for one particular language cannot be generalized just like that across languages. In other words, there may well be "a" category of MPs in other languages; one should just be reluctant in assuming that it is the same category with the same intensional and external definition (cp. Haspelmath 2010, 350).²⁶

The question then remains if other languages have a category that corresponds to the MP category in German. Cuenca (this volume), for instance, indicates that Catalan is generally thought not to have many prototypical MPs, if at all, and Aijmer (this volume) raises the question whether English forms such as *of course* can be considered as MPs.

As for French, there is some discussion about the existence of a MP category as well. Examples of MP candidates include *donc*, *quand même*, *seulement*, and *tout de même*, as in (18-20).

(18) Mais je ne peux *tout de même* pas les faire coïncider ?

(B. Clavel, *Malataverne*, p.120)

'But I can't *tout de même* make them get caught?'

(19) Asseyez-vous *donc*, Messieurs !

(H. Bazin, *La Mort du petit cheval*, p.145)

²⁶ Note that Diewald (this volume) also indicates that category features may vary across languages.

'Take *donc* a seat, gentlemen!'

- (20) Si j'avais *seulement* pu le consulter avant de rencontrer
Reslaut !

(C. Mauriac, *La Marquise sortit à cinq heures*, p.175)

'If *seulement* I could have consulted him before meeting
Reslaut!'

Looking back at the list of features of German MPs, it seems that most of them do also apply to the French particles. These elements cannot be inflected, negated, or intensified, they do not have constituent value, and they scope over the entire clause. Furthermore, their function is highly similar to that of German particles like *doch* (18-19) and *bloß* (20) (indicating that a positive answer is expected in (18), increasing the illocutionary force in (19-20)).

Still, scholars like Abraham (1988) and Waltereit (2006) claim that French cannot have MPs for topological reasons: German MPs are restricted to the middle field, whereas Romance languages do not have a middle field. Both parts of this reasoning turn out to be problematic, however: it has been shown above (§2.1.1) that German MPs can occur outside of the middle field, and at least in (18) and (20), it is clear that the French particles are placed between the finite and non-finite verb forms, hence in the middle field. Although the middle field tendency is admittedly somewhat weaker in

French (but note that French generally has a less expanded middle field than German), the middle field seems to be the prototypical position for MPs in French as well.²⁷ Furthermore, one may wonder if this difference in strength of the topological tendencies is sufficient to say that French does not have MPs, if the categories are language-specific: French does not have the German MP category, but it has a corresponding word class. It thus seems that one can agree with Söll (1974), Fónagy (1995), and Mosegaard Hansen (1998), among others, and claim that French does have MPs just like German (cp. Schoonjans submitted-b). The categories are not identical, but at least the same typical intensional features are at stake.

5.2. Prototypicality, granularity, and conceptualization in other languages

The existence of "a" category of MPs in other languages does not necessarily imply that the situation is fully comparable to German: one could imagine a well-delineated and neatly defined class of MPs in those other languages. However, Aijmer (this volume) and Cuenca (this volume)

²⁷ In the data presented in Schoonjans (submitted-a), if the middle field is clearly marked (i.e. if the clause contains a finite and a non-finite verb), 73.19% of the particles occur in the middle field, as opposed to 99.46% in German.

suggest for English and Catalan respectively that the MP category is not so neatly distinguishable from other word classes.

It seems that the categories are not entirely discrete in French either. This can be illustrated with the case of *seulement*, which, just like its German counterpart *nur*, can be used both as a DP and as a MP (next to its use as a focus particle). Both of these interpretations are possible in (21), taken from a discussion board about a computer game.

- (21) Tu le tiens a distance en le blessant a la même occasion.
Seulement ne te laisse pas prendre ! Ce boss one shot en
attaque de mêlée donc fais attention.²⁸
'You keep him at a distance and injure him at the same time.
Seulement don't get caught! This one-shot boss attacks
massively so be careful.'

Another example is the use of *tout de même* in (22). *Tout de même* is somewhat ambiguous here: it can be interpreted both as an adverb (meaning 'nevertheless') and as a MP (similar to German *doch*).

- (22) - Je suis venu vous dire au revoir.

²⁸ <<http://jd-forum.fr.perfectworld.eu/showthread.php?t=302641>> (04-01-2012).

- Eh bien, au revoir ! Buvez *tout de même* un dernier verre,
nous savons vivre, après tout.

(A. Camus, *Requiem pour une nonne*, p.832)

'- I have come to say good bye.

- Well, good bye! Drink *tout de même* one final glass, we
know how to live, after all.'

This example is similar to the case of German *eigentlich*, discussed above. In both cases, the use as a MP has developed from the adverbial use, and scholars disagree on whether the MP use has to be distinguished from the adverbial use. Jacques Moeschler (p.c.), for instance, claims that *tout de même* cannot be a MP because its contrastive meaning aspect is still too strong. This is an argument referring to the retention in grammaticalization processes, and is highly similar to Kohrt's arguments for *eigentlich*. Again, the degree of grammaticalization and the existence of an older use as a prototypical adverb seems to influence the discussion.

We can thus conclude that in French as well, there is a category of MPs which has a prototypical structure and fuzzy boundaries, and which furthermore overlaps with categories like adverbs and DPs, just like its German counterpart. The prototypicality is shown by the fact that most, but not all, French MP tokens occur in the middle field, as indicated in the previous section, and the fuzzy boundaries become obvious when looking at the examples just mentioned (*seulement* and *tout de même*). Furthermore,

issues of granularity and conceptualization play a role as well, as can be seen from the fact that there is discussion on whether these forms are MPs or not. What is more, the discussion goes beyond the level of MPs: as Léard (1996) shows, opinions about the status of a class of particles and about its structure and position in the linguistic system vary.

It thus turns out that the description in sections 2-4 above does not only hold for German. At least French, and probably several other languages as well, show a situation which is highly similar: there is a category of MPs which strongly resembles the German one, and for its definition (both internal and external), notions like prototypicality, granularity, and conceptualization may be helpful.

6. Summary and conclusions

The present contribution discussed the problem of defining the notion of 'modal particle' in German. The discussion focused on three levels of definition: the intensional level (typical features), the extensional level (category members), and the external level (position in the linguistic system), with special attention being paid to the central issue of this volume: how do MPs relate to DMs?

The starting point was the observation that, despite the significant body of literature on MPs, there still is no full agreement on the definition of this

category. The goal was not to try to resolve this problem and come up with one final solution; rather, the aim was to get an overview of the points of discussion at the different levels of definition, and to try to come to grips with the discussion, i.e. to understand why is there so much disagreement, and if (and how) it is possible to work with this category nevertheless.

The answer was found in three cognitive-linguistic notions: prototypicality, granularity, and conceptualization. That these notions can be applied to lexical categories is not a new claim in itself. So far, however, they have hardly been called upon when dealing with MPs, although they seem to be useful in trying to cope with the definition debate. Indeed, this category turns out to be prototypically structured, to have fuzzy boundaries and to show overlap with other categories (e.g. adverbs, DPs...). Whether a form is a MP thus depends on the level of horizontal granularity, i.e. on the amount of variation the prototype may show and to the extent a form may deviate from the prototype to still be a (non-prototypical) member of the category. This is where conceptualization comes in: how the category is conceived partly determines which features are thought to be more important or more salient, and this may have an impact on the structure of the prototype and the level of horizontal granularity chosen.

As for the relation with other categories, important notions are vertical granularity and (again) conceptualization. Depending on the aims and level of detail of an analysis, the level of vertical granularity may differ, in that it may be more appropriate to work with more specific or more general

categories. Which groupings are at order depends on which similarities or differences are judged more important or more relevant, and this depends itself on the aims of the study and on the conceptualization of the phenomena. This turns out to be an important factor in the debate on the MP-DM relationship, together with the terminological confusion and the lack of a clear definition.

It has been shown as well that these problems are not just restricted to German. That they are most apparent for German is due to the fact that German is the language *par excellence* to study MPs, but they are not significantly smaller in other languages, as has been shown for French. The situation as described in the main part of this paper (§2-4) may be typical for German, but other languages do at least show striking similarities.

It should be clear that notions like prototypicality, granularity, and conceptualization cannot bring the answer to the discussion, but they can help to better understand the debate. Still the reported issues should not prevent us from studying the linguistic elements in question. The terminological confusion does not make (reporting on) the research easier, but does not exclude it either, as long as it is clearly indicated how the terms are used. Further empirical analysis leads to an even better understanding of how language functions in this domain, which may eventually result in more terminological transparency and agreement on the definitions and the mutual relations of the categories. At least for the time being, however, it

seems that notions of prototypicality, granularity, and conceptualization can be helpful in tackling the definitory issues.

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